

Yo, Diary

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Yo, Diary

by [EmeraldHonour \(EmeraldHaze15\)](#)

Summary

Amongst the original Nightwatcher's things, Raphael found a dusty old book.

It turned out to be a journal, not just of David's time as the Nightwatcher, but of his feelings and thoughts while he was fighting crime.

One day, Raphael found himself picking up a pen and opening the book to a blank page...

Notes

This is my fic for yellowhollyhock's 2026 [March for Raph](#) prompt challenge.

This year, I decided to just have fun with the prompts, while also writing a cohesive story. This diary format is the ideal way for me to just write with no pressure to paint a scene or balance dialogue or tie up all the loose ends of 31 oneshots 😊

I'll try to post a chapter a day for the whole month of March. They're mostly pre-written: I just have to hit "post".

My goal has been at least 300 words for each entry, but some of them are over that.

Chapter 1: Field Medic

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

...This is stupid.

I don't even know why I'm doing this.

...

...Ok, maybe I do.

See, aside from April and Casey, there's only ever been one other human I've known. Like, personally, I mean.

I ain't counting all those criminals and lowlifes on the streets. Far as I'm concerned, they ain't human. Not with the way they treat innocent people.

(Heh. I can just hear the others objecting to that. Well, tough. This is *my* diary, now. I get to write what I want in it.)

Nah, the only other human I've ever known was in my life for all of twelve hours. But he had a bigger impact on me than anyone else I've known for the past 2 years.

His name was David Merryweather.

...Don't know why I'm even telling you that. I guess... it just feels wrong not to say his name.

David.

Even his own family didn't know who he really was. Huh. Kinda ironic, now I stop to think about it. He took his secret to the grave. Far as I know, I'm the only other person he ever told.

And I ain't exactly 'human', myself.

Maybe if I was human, I might have been able to actually help him. Maybe I could have driven him to the hospital, or called one of the neighbors to come, or done *something* aside from just watching as he bled out in my arms.

Sure, Master Splinter taught us all basic first aid. We'd be idiots to go out doing all the stuff we do without at least knowing how to wrap a sprain and stem a bleed. But there's very little anyone can do with a roll of gauze against a fatal wound.

I knew David was a goner the moment I saw all that blood. It's stupid, really. He spent his whole life fighting crime in a literal metal suit, only to get gunned down in the apparent safety of his own home.

There wasn't anything I could have done to save him. He knew it, and I knew it. We've always known death was a reality of the lives we live. Master Splinter made sure we understood the lethal reality of the weapons we carry. We've killed, before – even the Brainiac has.

But this was the first time I've ever lost someone.

...I'm sorry, David. You were a good guy, and I wish I could've gotten to know you better in person, instead of just reading your old crime fighting journal.

But it's mine, now. The helmet. The suit. The bike. The title.

...And the book.

I'll keep writing your story, David.

I'll keep the Nightwatcher alive.

Chapter End Notes

This entry is heavily inspired by the [first prequel comic](#).

Chapter 2: Motorcycle

Chapter Notes

HUGE shout out to [redstringraven on Tumblr](#) for help figuring out what kind of bike Raph rides in this movie. The eagle-eyed among you might also notice I took some bike specs from the 03 episode ["Across the Universe" transcript](#)

I'm no motorhead myself, so any mistakes are entirely my own!

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Speaking of the bike: that baby is *sweet!*

Sure, she needed a total overhaul after standing around unused for years in David's secret lair. And sure, she hasn't got the higher-spec brake calipers or die-cast aluminum frame of a more modern bike.

But she's a classic for a reason. They don't make 'em like her anymore. She's a custom build – one of a kind. She's got the standard tubular steel trellis frame of a '91 Ducati M900, with a rake angle of 31.5 degrees, and a top-of-the-line 160 hp multivalve, water-cooled engine with a high compression ratio. And I was able to tighten her shift linkage, tweak her throttle response, upgrade her fuel injection system and add semi-floating front disc brakes when I tuned her up.

That's right. *I* did it. By myself. Donnie ain't the only turtle with a tool belt, after all.

...Not that I could've asked for his help if I wanted to. Ever since Leo left on his pilgrimage, Don has been getting further and further up my shell with each passing day. I didn't even know it was physically possible for anyone to be bossier than Leo, but Donnie's taken the cake, somehow.

... Kinda like how he takes all the cake Mikey brings home for Master Splinter. Oh well. At least I know there's always food in the fridge when I get home early in the morning.

It's become almost a ritual to have a slice after my patrol, these days. Ain't that sad? Sitting in the kitchen at 5 in the morning, eating birthday cake by myself...

Donnie doesn't know about the Nightwatcher. He'd never approve, for one thing. And if he found out, he'd probably find some way to go crying to Leo about it. Wouldn't that be ironic? It would be just like Leo to only show up again after 2 years just to lay into me.

I don't need my big brother back in my life just to lecture me. I don't need him back *at all*. I got a good thing going here.

None of the others would understand, anyway. ...'Cept maybe Casey. That lug-head's been a vigilante longer than any of us. And I know he'd be insanely jealous of the bike. But ever since him and April got together, he's been trying to turn over a new leaf. Be all mature and responsible and stuff, for her, y'know. He still goes out at night to fight crime, but April don't like it much. And I don't want to get caught up in the middle of *that* whole situation.

...Ugh. At least my bike doesn't give me this kind of trouble.

Chapter End Notes

The line about Donnie taking Splinter's cake is referencing [this deleted scene](#) from the movie. You can actually see Mikey get all that cake out during the family meal scene, where April calls Donnie to tell him Raph's unconscious.

Chapter 3: Eye for an Eye

Tracking down those punks that killed David was easy. They didn't even try to cover their trail. I literally burst in on them counting the money they'd stolen from his wallet!

A life, for 14 bucks.

They got what they deserved. An eye for an eye. A life for a life.

In fact, who knows how many other lives they'd taken. They got off easy.

... Not sure my brothers would agree.

Though none of us is a stranger to making sure bad guys don't get back up again, the others have always been a bit more... restrained, than me. By which I mean; they don't have the guts.

I do what I have to do to make sure punks like that don't roam the streets, robbing old men and killing innocent people. If that makes me a bad guy, then so be it.

At least I'm doing something.

I'm not naïve.

I know my campaign won't clean up New York's streets for good. I know I'm barely even making a dent in the crime rate. But I have to do *something*!

I can't just sit around on my shell like the others. I can't!

Donnie's job is so demeaning. I don't know how he puts up with it. If it had been me, I'd have been fired from that gig in the first 3 minutes!

And Mikey's work isn't much better. Sure, at least he's getting out of the lair each day, which is more than can be said for Don. But being a glorified piñata is no life for a ninja warrior!

At least I can say I'm proud of what I do. Even if I can't tell anyone about it. Mikey would whine, Donnie would tell, April would fret, Casey would blab, and Master Splinter would lock me in my room until Leo gets home to lecture me to death.

No thanks.

Donnie seems to have made it his personal mission to take that stick Leo shoved up his shell and beat the rest of us round the head with it! He scolds Sensei about his cholesterol. He micromanages everything Mikey does. And he tries to tell me how to live my life. Not happening. He ain't my leader.

Neither is Leo.

I don't want to be led anymore. I'm better off calling my own shots.

Chapter 4: Teddy Bear

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

My brothers and I used to have this raggedy old teddy bear when we were tots.

It was a panda, with black limbs and a white body (though the white was more gray by the time we got it). I don't know where Splinter found the moth-eaten thing, but I do know we had to share.

It wasn't like a giant mutant rat could just waltz into any old toy store, after all. And anyway, we didn't have no money to buy things, especially not luxuries like toys and games. So, everything we had, we had to share.

It wasn't easy. I know Splinter tried to instill good values in us, like tolerance and generosity. And it's not like he failed, exactly. For as big as Mikey's stomach is, he'll always leave a slice of pizza for each of us. And shell knows Donnie needs all the tolerance he can get to work that crappy IT job of his!

Not sure I learnt a whole lot of patience and goodwill, though. It's always felt like time isn't moving fast enough for me. When we were learning ninjitsu, it felt like forever before Splinter let us practice with real weapons. And when Mikey's hogging the TV it feels like the seconds turn into hours. And then there's the way time actually seems to go *backwards* when Donnie starts info dumping!

I found that bear again, y'know. I wasn't looking for it, or nothing. I just happened to spot Mikey coming out of Leo's room one day. He didn't see me as I snuck in after him.

The bear was propped up on Leo's pillow, waiting for him to come home.

I almost ripped it off his bed and hurled it into the sewers.

Leo's always been the one I've struggled to keep my cool with the most. It feels like everything he says is purposefully designed to tick me off! He never listens to my ideas or does what I want to do. And now we're the ones that are supposed to be waiting around for him??

Well, I'm done waiting. It's been 2 years. It's got to be my turn now.

Chapter End Notes

Since Splinter's trophy room in this film references the 90s movies with the TCRI/TGRI canister, Shredder's helmet and the Time Scepter, I thought it would be fun to include

[the panda plushie](#) from the first movie, too XD

Chapter 5: Moments with Splinter

Master Splinter and I barely speak, anymore. Mostly because I go out of my way to avoid him.

It's not just him. I actively avoid everyone, these days. I don't need their judging – or worse, *pitying* – looks. And Sensei may be getting on in years, but I'd be a fool to pretend the sharp ninja master doesn't still lurk behind those weary eyes.

Master Splinter would sniff me out faster than I could say 'Nightwatcher'. So, I don't give him the chance.

I'm not an idiot. I know he worries about me. I know I'm a massive disappointment to him. I see that look in his eyes from across the lair. Maybe he does know. Maybe he's just waiting for me to come to him...

Well, he'll be waiting a long time, then. 'Cause I ain't saying nothing!

What even is there to say?

"I'm using the ninja skills that you taught us?"

"I'm helping people, living up to the code of Bushido, like you told us to do?"

"I'm actually doing something about the scum on the streets, unlike some of us?"

None of that matters, because I'm not the favorite son.

It's always been Leo. He's been a mini-Splinter for as long as any of us can remember. He's always been the one Splinter pays attention to, the one that Splinter praises, the one that Splinter's proud of. The only time Dad ever turns his attention to me is to tell me off!

I'm sick of living in Leo's shadow. I'm sick of looking in my father's eyes, only to see him staring right past me. I'm sick of everything I do being compared to my *perfect* older brother!

Well, let me tell you something: Leo *ain't* perfect!

...

...

...

~~... he'd be here if he was.~~

Chapter 6: New York City

It's kinda funny, how you can love something and hate it at the same time.

Take the city, for instance.

I grew up here. It's the only place I've ever known.

New York is in my blood. The roar of the traffic is the soundtrack to my life. The rumble of the subway is my lullaby when I go to bed. The wail of sirens and honks of horns are my theme tune.

Sometimes I reckon that if any crazy scientist did manage to get me and cut me open, they'd find a perfect map of Manhattan on my organs.

This city is a part of me.

I never want to live anywhere else.

And yet...

Sometimes, I can't stand this town. It's noisy and smelly and dirty, and full of scumbags. One of these days, this city is gonna kill me. I know it. Part of me wishes I could leave. Pack it in and go somewhere entirely different. But I could never do that.

New York City is family. It's my loud, obnoxious, pain-in-the-shell family.

And you don't turn your back on family.

... At least, I used to think that. Now, I don't really know what to think.

How is it that a place can be more like my family than my own brothers and father?

... Easy, when they make it clear that they don't want to know me anymore. Donnie would sooner tell me off than listen to what I have to say. Splinter's aged double since his star student left. And Mikey's so tired all the time from work that I barely recognize him anymore. ...I barely recognize any of them anymore.

And as for Leo...

I guess one of us made it out of this city. Would I have done any different, if I'd had the chance to go?

I honestly dunno...

Chapter 7: Monster

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I saw something today.

It was only a glimpse. I was riding my bike along the Brooklyn Bridge when I caught movement out of the corner of my visor.

For one brief moment I thought it was my brothers. A flicker of the shadows, a silhouette in the air, and then nothing. Disappeared back into the night, like good ninjas.

Only, it wasn't them. I know it wasn't them. Donnie was on the clock, Mikey had passed out on the couch after another party, and Leo...

It wasn't them. I guess it could've been the Foot, but we haven't seen hide nor hair of those jerks since we took down the Shredder. And besides, call it a hunch, but I got the feeling that whatever it was, it wasn't human. But us turtles (and Splinter, I guess) are the only cryptids in New York city (that I know about...). And I could've sworn the glimpse I caught looked like giant spider legs...

That's not the only weird thing I've seen lately, either. A flicker of what looked like giant bat wings on top of the Empire State Building... A roar of something other than the D train down in the subway... And I know there have been whales that have got stuck in the Hudson before, but that shadow in the river didn't move like no whale I've ever seen...

I know New York City has a reputation for the weird and wonderful. I know it's a bit of a magnet for strange types and stranger goings on. But I swear these creatures weren't here before. I'd have known. You don't live your whole life in a city and not know the local ghost stories, after all.

My police scanner kicked in before I could decide whether to turn around and investigate whatever it was I saw on the bridge. Some punks had the gall to rob a bodega on Raphie's turf. I forgot all about the spider thing until I got home.

Look, I wasn't scared by the spider in the shower! I just wasn't expecting it, that's all. And I definitely didn't scream!

At least this time I wasn't covered in blood when the guys came running...

Chapter End Notes

The creatures Raph refers to here are meant to be some of the 13 monsters from the movie. I headcanon that they dispersed across the world when they originally emerged from the portal 3000 years ago, and it's only now that the Stars of Keekan are realigning again that they're being drawn back to the portal in Winters' tower, NYC.

Chapter 8: Past Curfew

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Mikey was the last person I'd expect to catch me sneaking back into the lair.

Thank shell I'd already taken off my Nightwatcher suit! I knew from the start that I couldn't hide that thing, or my bike, here at home. There's only minimal space in the lair, and over the years between the four of us, we've found every nook and cranny in it that could be used as a storage space.

I knew that if I wanted to keep my secret, I'd have to find somewhere else to stash my gear. And yes, that includes this journal. A boarded-up storm drain about 10 minutes from home was ideal. I got into the habit of changing there, and only there.

So, when Mikey caught me at 4 in the morning, I just had to play dumb. It's not the first time I've been busted coming in after curfew.

At first, it was Splinter. As a kid, I severely underestimated his ability to tell when I'd snuck out. Then Leo adopted the role – along with a whole lot *else* – when Dad named him leader. We used to wake up the whole lair with our shouting.

Unfortunately, being warden was just one more of the jobs Donnie took on when Leo left. It's hit and miss whether he catches me, though. If he's not passed out in his chair, he's normally stuck helping some obnoxious idiot on the phone.

Out of everyone, Mikey's never busted my chops for being out late. For starters, the kid's way less of a stick in the mud than Leo or Don. If anyone else understands the need for freedom and a little healthy rebellion, it's Mikey.

But since he's taken up this party job, my little bro is exhausted all the time. He comes home and nearly always crashes out straight after dinner. I can't remember the last time I saw him playing video games 'til 2 in the morning.

I expected him to be asleep. Not stood there, backlit by the kitchen light, watching me drag myself in through the lair's back entrance.

I'll admit: I froze. For half a second, bathed in the blue light from the open fridge, and without his mask or gear on, I mistook him for Leo. In my defense, I was also dead on my feet after a particularly long patrol. It's not my fault I wasn't thinking straight.

But then he shifted, and I caught those distinctive blue eyes of his. Don's always puzzled over where Mikey got the genes for blue eyes from, when the rest of us are all shades of brown. All I know is, they give my baby brother one hell of an unfair advantage when it comes to the puppy-dog look.

I couldn't stand looking at those sad, blue eyes. I'd have almost preferred Splinter's scolding, or Leo's lectures, or Don's dressing down.

Because, instead of any of that, all I could see in Mikey's gaze was sorrow and a longing for something so deep it hurt.

I went up to my room before he could say a word.

Chapter End Notes

This was one of the prompts that inspired me to write this fic as a diary from 07 Raph's POV.

Chapter 9: Cutting Wit

I didn't speak to Mikey at all the next day.

I half expected him to bust down my door and refuse to leave until I told him what was going on. I know it's what he would've done in the past. Mikey's always hated it when he thinks he's being left out of something.

But nothing happened. No little brother at my door, whining to be let in on my big secret. He didn't even rat me out to Don or Splinter about getting in late. Which was a surprise. Mikey's generally cool about that sort of stuff, but he also can't keep his mouth shut for all the pizza in Manhattan.

...Or, so I used to think. Nowadays, it feels like I don't know him at all. Like I don't know any of them at all...

Instead, I spent the whole day in my room, as usual. Undisturbed (by anyone else, at least. I couldn't exactly relax and get some shut eye, what with all my nerves on edge waiting for my family to come in and demand to know what was going on). But no one came to my door. By the time I crept out in the evening for my routine patrol of the city, the lair was quiet. Splinter was meditating in his chambers. Mikey was out on a job. Don was stuck on what sounded like a messy call. No one even noticed me leave.

Like nothing had happened.

I'll admit, it freaked me out, a little bit. But maybe Mikey didn't suspect anything? Maybe Donnie's too focused on his tech job? Maybe Splinter has no idea I've been regularly breaking curfew?

Maybe my secret is safe...?

Yeah, and maybe today's the day Leo will come home with his tail between his legs and apologize for ghosting us all!

Ha! As if.

Chapter 10: Last Slice of Pizza

I honestly don't remember the last time we all ate together.

I mean, obviously it was before Leo left. We haven't been 'together' since. But it's not like everything suddenly stopped the moment he walked out, either.

Don's always been the type to sneak his plate off to his workroom, if he can get away with it. What a hypocrite! If any of us brought food into his lab, he'd throw a scute! But I guess the same rules don't apply to Mr. Impossibly High IQ.

The moment he'd realize Don was sneaking off, Mikey would start up his whining. It was always "*I'm right in the middle of a level*" or "*This show is live*" or "*TV helps my digestion*". It rarely worked. Which means he'd always resort back to "*How come Donnie doesn't have to stay?*".

That would set Fearless Leader off on one of his 'honor' and 'respect' and 'manners' rants, which Donnie would be conveniently deaf to. By that point, my hunger would be gone. But woe betide if *I* tried to leave the table.

I swear, Leo's got some kinda radar for when I step outta line. It's like, the moment I even *think* about defying his orders, an alarm goes off in his head and his eyes lock onto me.

I can't stand that stare. It feels like fire ants crawling all over my scales.

And I *hate* bugs.

The explosion between us would put an end to whatever mockery of a family dinner was left. Splinter would be forced to step in before we killed each other, Mikey would run off to lock himself in his room, Don would shut himself away in his lab, I'd storm off topside, and on my way out I'd hear Leo summoned into Sensei's quarters for another lesson in how *not* to lead a team.

In the end, it just got easier and less disruptive to get our own meals.

My schedule means I don't generally have to see the others much, anyway. And with Mikey and Donnie's workloads, Splinter's given up trying for family meals. I'm well used to getting my own food.

So, I wasn't expecting the lone slice of pizza waiting for me on the kitchen table when I got home last night.

Nor the slice of birthday cake next to it.

Chapter 11: Big Feelings

Listen – I know I’m not the sharpest blade in the dojo. I ain’t got Donnie’s smarts, or Leo’s strategy, or Mikey’s social skills. But I ain’t dumb, neither.

Case in point - I can read the situation on the streets and know how things are gonna go down before anyone’s even made a move. I dunno how. I just know.

Like, I can tell at a glance if a group of kids is out to cause trouble, or if they’re just mucking about. And I know which parts of the city are gonna be thin with police on any given night, so I know where to focus my attentions.

Maybe it’s experience. The police scanner in my helmet helps a lot, too. But I like to think it’s also a factor of growing up in this city.

Y’ know, back when I was young and stupid, I used to think each of us had our own ‘thing’ that we brought to the team. Like, none of us is dumb (and anyone who says differently, I’ll pound ‘em into paste!). The rest of us just don’t have Donnie-type brains. But that don’t make us any less intelligent, in our own ways.

Donnie’s obviously the smart one. No denying that. He’s wasted on that ridiculous tech support job. I honestly don’t know why he bothers with it.

Mikey may seem dumb, but he’s got more natural talent in his little finger than the rest of us put together. Not that I’d ever tell him that, of course. He may be a gifted ninja, but he’s still a loudmouth. I’d never hear the end of it. And the kid may fill his head with skateboarding and ice cream cake, but he *notices* things. I have to be careful what I do or say around Mike, because he catches on to more than I think anyone expects him to. And I’m not just talking about me sneaking in every night.

I think he’s on to me. I wish I could tell him about the Nightwatcher. He was my best friend when we were kids. I miss that. I miss having someone to talk to who just *gets* me.

I know Mikey misses the old days, too. I know he longs for the time when we beat up bad guys and got to push our ninjitsu to its limits. I know he’d love to be doing what I’m doing.

But I also know Mikey’s a good kid. He still clings onto the belief that we’re still a family.

He’d never leave Don and Splinter like that. And I can’t risk him ratting me out (sorry, Sensei).

And then there’s our Fearless Leader himself. Splinter Jr. It’s hard to tell where Dad ends and Leo begins, sometimes. I can still remember the day Sensei officially named him leader of the team.

Just thinking about it makes me so mad! What the hell does Leo have that I don’t?? I’m stronger than him! Braver, too.

And, unlike him, I stuck around!

Chapter 12: Music

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I can't remember the last time I heard music in the lair.

Donnie used to always have these terrible synth tracks blaring in his lab. I don't know if he was just trying to hear the music over the sounds of his buzzsaw, or if he simply tuned it out all together when he got into the zone.

Mikey loves his hip hop. He'd crank the tunes way up every time he was in the kitchen, or lounging on the couch, or even when he woke up alone at 2am. Don had to refurbish an old Walkman for him just so the rest of us could get some sleep.

Leo, predictably, loved those meditation CDs. Y'know, the ones with nothing but falling rain or leaves rustling in the wind. I wouldn't call them 'music', but that's what he listened to most often. What a dork. Though, in his last letter he mentioned that he'd grown kind of fond of Spanish guitar.

Not me. All that soft, shushy stuff makes my scales crawl. Mikey once spent an hour whispering in my ear when he found out. I nearly decked him.

I need music that gets my blood pumping. Rock is good. Rap is better. It helps that I can relate to a lot of the themes in the songs, even if being a mutant ninja ain't exactly a universal concept.

But, like I said, the lair doesn't have much music, these days. Don's too busy with work, Leo ain't around no more, and I sleep most of the day. I sometimes tail Mikey's van when he's back late – not that I'd ever let him know, of course – and I've heard him with the stereo on then.

But the moment he parks up and slips back into the sewers, it's like any hint of that side of him just shuts down.

I think the only music our home hears regularly anymore is the theme tune to Splinter's soaps.

Chapter End Notes

ASMR works for some people.

I headcanon that it doesn't work for 07 Raph ^^;

Chapter 13: Craftsmanship

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Y’know, I never could figure out where Splinter got our weapons from.

It’s clear that they’re the real deal. No shoddy craftsmanship or cheap mass production for our family. Even the Foot doesn’t have weapons as good as ours.

And it’s not like Splinter could have made them himself. What, an old rat is gonna craft steel blades and tempered wood in the bowels of New York’s sewers? With what forge?

But every time I’ve asked, Master Splinter’s just gotten this twinkle in his eye and said something along the lines of “*Ninjitsu secrets, Raphael*”. What’s that even supposed to mean? What, when you become a master, you can transform any old bit of metal into a freaking katana with ninja magic, or something?!

The Nightwatcher gear is also incredibly well made. The chains could’ve come from an old machine or off a freighter or something, but the helmet is custom built. Thank shell I’ve got a roughly human-ish head. Of course, I had to modify the rest of the suit when I got it. There wasn’t exactly room for a carapace in the original design, and my legs and arms are considerably bulkier than David’s were. Adding more leather panels to widen the suit was the easy part. Shaping the metal bits to fit my body was another matter.

At least as a human, David had more access to resources when he made the gear. There were some tools among his stuff – a blowtorch and hammer, as well as oil for keeping the leather supple and the metal rust-free – that he obviously used for minor repairs. But I wish I knew whether he crafted the whole suit himself, or if he found someone who could do it for him, quiet like. Sadly, I’ll never know.

I wish I could’ve talked about this stuff with him.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, that is a wink and a nudge towards the Rise Turtles' ninpo powers XD I couldn't resist!

Chapter 14: Knight in Shining Armor

Ok, so I've been avoiding Mikey.

What am I supposed to say to him, anyway?

"I've been going out every night to fight bad guys, like we used to back when we were a team, but I know the others won't approve, so I kept my mouth shut"?

Yeah. That would go down *great*.

It's not that I don't trust Mikey. I do! I just... I know he'd want to come with me. And frankly, the Nightwatcher works better solo.

It's not like the old days, anymore. Things are more... dangerous with the Nightwatcher. More... lethal. Not that I doubt Mikey's skill, or anything. I've always known the kid's got my back in a fight. Like I said before, Mikey's an incredible ninja, when he puts his mind to it. Or at least, he used to be. Like any muscle, if you don't use it, you lose it. And I don't think letting kids beat him up with foam nunchucks really counts as training.

It's not just swords and shuriken anymore, either. It's semi-automatic rifles and army grade weaponry! I don't know where the gangs are getting these guns from, but someone's supplying them. It's one thing to dodge a blade: it's a whole other thing to dodge a bullet! Mikey could wind up getting really hurt out there on the streets. 'Specially without his own metal armor to protect him.

...I always used to be Mikey's armor. I always used to be the whole *team's* armor. It used to be my job to tank the hits. I could take it. I'm the biggest and the strongest. And I've got the highest pain tolerance out of all of us (or, as Donnie used to call me, "numbskull").

Better me than any of them.

But those days are gone. Now, I only have to worry about my own shell.

It's better that way.

Chapter 15: Don't Ever Scare Me Like That Again

It was supposed to have been a simple job.

Couple of punks hijacked a car to escape the police. My bike is better able to weave in and out of city traffic than their squad cars. It's got better acceleration, too.

I was gunning it after the thieves without a second thought. I've done it a hundred times before.

Technically, the Nightwatcher is a vigilante, so technically, he's a lawbreaker. But the only cops that have ever tried to bust him have been fresh-faced rookies. The guys with actual experience under their belts willingly turn a blind eye.

I wonder how 'blind' they'd be if they caught a glimpse of the mutant behind the mask?

Anyway, I took off after the punks. I learnt how to drive in New York City, so I can cut through traffic and dodge all sorts of obstacles with my eyes closed. And with my bike, I can take shortcuts down alleys and between buildings that the stolen car couldn't fit through.

I had it in the bag. Just a little further, and two creeps would be in chains, one stolen vehicle returned to its rightful owner, and another success for the Nightwatcher.

And then I saw it.

Don't ask me what Mikey's party wagon was doing out so late. Maybe he'd had a gig that ran overtime. Or maybe he was just craving a midnight pizza. Whatever the case, he was there. And the speeding car was going too fast to avoid him.

Car t-boned van. The screech of metal and rubber on the road was like a bomb going off. I was forced to throw myself onto the asphalt, or I'd have ended up as a turtle pancake in the middle. I felt something pop in my shoulder on impact.

But my mind was in the van. With Mikey.

At first, I couldn't tell which way up it was. The mangled wreck didn't look anything like the vehicle I knew. I was on my feet before I had a chance to think, hauling myself over to the scene to haul my brother out.

New York is never quiet. Passersby were already stopping to gawk. I couldn't let any of them see Mikey.

His van was on its side, driver's door pinned against the road. I near enough wrenched the passenger side door off its hinges to get to him.

"Mikey!"

For a moment, I thought the worst. He was so still, his face rigid and his head at an angle that was just *wrong*.

Then I realized he was still wearing that *stupid* mascot helmet.

“Mikey?”

I removed the foam head as carefully as I could. I know that Donnie would have yelled at me about possible neck and spine injuries, but I had to see Mikey’s face. His *real* face.

Besides, there wasn’t time to wait for the paramedics to arrive with a neck brace.

One look at the mutant turtle driver, and spinal injuries would have been the last thing on their minds.

“Mikey...” I pulled that stupid mask off and heard a soft groan. My heart started to beat again.

He cracked open those impossibly blue eyes and looked up at me. “Ra-phie...?” he croaked.

Of course he knew it was me. I hadn’t removed any of my gear, not even my own helmet, but the kid still knew who I was. I think he’s known for a long time. I wasn’t exactly in the mood to talk about it.

I could have cried with relief. “Don’t *ever* scare me like that again! Y’ hear?” Thankfully, he was too woozy to crack back, but a dopey smile did curl his beak. *Jerk*.

“I got ya’, Mike. C’mon, little bro. Let’s get you outta here before anyone sees ya’.”

Somehow, I managed to remove him from the van. There were some people gathered round, reaching out to help, but I tucked him in close and used my body to hide him from their view as best I could. The dark lighting and the chaos of the scene helped a bit, too. Thankfully, no one tried to take him from me.

In all the noise and activity, I slipped down a side street and got Mikey into the sewers. Only once I was sure we were safe did I take off my helmet.

Mikey’s goofy smile widened when he saw me properly. I was fairly certain he had a concussion, at least. Doctor Donnie would be best equipped to handle that. I just had to get the kid home. But not before removing the rest of my gear. I couldn’t let anyone *else* know. I’d have to come back for my bike, anyway. And it wasn’t like anyone would steal my Nightwatcher suit in the sewers.

Don and Splinter were appropriately alarmed when I got back with a half-conscious Mikey in my arms. Turns out they’d already seen the accident on the news and were in the process of frantically trying to contact Mike. Neither of them questioned what I was doing out, or how I’d come across the scene. I think they were operating under the mantra of ‘better off not knowing’. Not like I’d have told them the truth, anyway.

Thankfully, aside from a mild concussion, whiplash and some nasty bruises, Mikey's going to be ok.

Which is more than can be said for the van.

Chapter 16: Movie Night

So, Mikey's on home rest for a few days.

He's naturally had to cancel the parties he was booked for. Not that he even has a van to go to them with, at the moment. Kid's surprisingly more ok with that than I expected him to be.

Thankfully, he's not too badly hurt. More shaken up and rattled loose than anything major. He'll be back on the road again as soon as Don can source him a new set of wheels. He's already got a few possibilities lined up. We just need to wait for Casey to check them out in person and pick up whichever one they choose.

Man, it sucks having to hide behind our human friends.

April's away right now. Some treasure hunting gig down south. Casey hasn't told her about Mikey's accident. She'd only worry, and it's not like she needs to cut her trip short, or anything. My brother is fine. He just needs a little rest.

I'm grounded, too. Not literally. Splinter hasn't said a word. Don's done all the talking for him, though it's more talking *at* me than *to* me. But I couldn't exactly hide my sprained shoulder from him, once he was done patching Mikey up. He stuck my arm in a sling and ordered me to rest, too.

I only agreed because I want to keep an eye on Mikey. Don't want the kid to start bleeding out of his ears, or anything. Oh, I know Splinter and Don can watch him. But I might as well hang around anyway. It's not like I can do much crime fighting with a bum shoulder, right now.

It was Mikey who suggested the movie night. We haven't had one of those in years. Don tried to argue that screens were bad for someone with a concussion. But even he can't stay firm against those big blue eyes, especially when our baby brother is sick. Besides, it meant he could keep an eye on Mikey, too.

He bundled the kid up on the couch and stuck on something we'd all seen a million times already. I was half tempted to sneak off to my room, now that Don was around to watch Mikey. But my baby brother latched onto my arm, and I was stuck. I gave up and settled in for a lazy night.

Mikey dozed off pretty quickly. Donnie had said it was ok for him to sleep now, so we didn't wake him. The genius had brought his own laptop through so he could keep working in front of the TV.

It was almost like old times again. My brothers and I, settled in front of the TV, just being together.

We could almost forget that we were one short...

Chapter 17: Fire

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I go out specifically to stop crimes.

My job is to bust criminals, wherever I see ‘em. That’s what I’m good at. Chasing down creeps and beating up bad guys. Stopping muggings and interrupting break ins. If I can take just one scumbag off the streets, then I consider my night a success.

But my patrols don’t always go to plan.

Other stuff – like saving people from a burning building, for example – I generally leave to the guys with the proper equipment and training. That kinda thing is outside my wheelhouse. I ain’t dumb: I know about the dangers of smoke inhalation and backdrafts.

Leave fighting fires to the actual firefighters.

... So, quite how I found myself charging headfirst into a burning apartment block, I don’t know.

(Alright, maybe I do. Look, I’d have to have a shell of stone to ignore the old woman on the street screaming that her daughter and baby grandson were still inside.)

It was a few nights after Mikey got totaled by that jerk in a stolen car. Doctor Donnie hadn’t given me the all-clear yet, but my shoulder was feeling a lot better, and I was going stir crazy being stuck inside the lair. I wasn’t intending to fight crime, or nothing. I just wanted to get my bike and suit back before someone with sticky fingers decided to help themselves.

I retrieved the suit and helmet first, then retraced my steps for my bike. The police had her locked up with the wreck of the stolen car and Mikey’s van. Thankfully, she was mostly unharmed – a bit of paint scuffed off the body, and a fresh dent in the frame, but nothing serious. It was child’s play for me to pick the gate of the impound lot and drive her off.

It was on my way back that I saw the flames and heard the screaming.

...I couldn’t just ride on by. The fire brigade weren’t there yet, and there were innocent people still inside the building. I *had* to do something.

I was charging in before anyone could stop me. A leather and metal suit gets hot on a normal day, but racing into a burning building in that getup had me feeling like a roast turtle in an oven! I had to work fast.

The first few rooms were completely engulfed in flames. I took the stairs two at a time, and that’s when I heard it over the roar of the fire: a baby’s cry. I honed in on the sound and found a door that had been barricaded from the inside. My chains were red hot even through my

gloves, but I bust down that door anyway. A woman was crouched by the window, holding her wailing baby to her chest.

I guess I must've looked like some kind of creature from the pits of hell in my black suit, with flames behind me. But we were outta time for niceties. I grabbed her and carried them both out of that building, handing the woman off to her screaming mother once we were back on the street.

I didn't stick around for 'thankyou's. It wasn't until I was safely a couple of blocks away that I realized my suit was smoldering. A spark had caught the leather sleeve and set it on fire. It was easy to pat out, but the damage went all the way through to my skin. Thankfully, the burn was minor.

Donnie was checking up on Mikey's bumps and bruises went I got back to the lair, so neither of them noticed me sneak off to wrap my own arm.

Chapter End Notes

This entry was inspired by 2 panels in the [3rd prequel comic](#), where Mikey is watching a news report about the Nightwatcher saving a woman and her 2 month old son from a burning building.

Chapter 18: Fiber Arts

My suit needed quite a few repairs when I retrieved it. Alongside the burn in the sleeve that I hadn't gotten around to fixing yet, there was a particularly bad road rash along the right pant leg.

It was actually Casey that taught me how to sew.

Yeah, I know. *Casey*. Who'd have thought that bum had skill with anything besides a baseball bat? Well, it turns out he's pretty experienced with a needle and thread, too.

I mean, besides the obvious. Dude's sutured himself up so many times that he could put a trained surgeon to shame. He used to be my first choice for wound care, back in the day. Sure, Doctor Donnie took it upon himself to be our team medic. But Casey's stitches are so good that he barely leaves a scar.

It turns out that Jones learnt how to sew as a kid. He used to spend a lot of time up at his grandma's farm, y' see, and the old girl taught him a whole load of life lessons, from cooking to cleaning to repairing clothes. Doesn't sound like she gave him much choice, either. But he's grateful for the life skills, now.

And so am I, I guess. I can't exactly go to Donnie with all my Nighterwatcher injuries. He'd ask too many questions about how I got 'em. Though, Casey's started to give me knowing looks, too. At least he didn't say anything when I asked him to teach me. It makes sense for me to be able to return the favor when he's got an injury he can't quite reach.

The others know I can sew. I think Master Splinter likes that I've got an outlet that isn't violent, for a change. Mostly. (I'm sure he'd rather I wasn't patching up my own stab wounds, but hey, beggars can't be choosers.) And being able to sew means I can repair stuff around the lair, too. I've patched up bedsheets and dojo mats and altered those trench coats so our shells aren't quite so obvious underneath them. Not that any of us use them much, these days.

Casey knows. About me doing my own stitches, I mean. I think the others do, too. It's not always possible to hide my injuries from them, even when we barely see each other these days. They're gonna spot a new line of sutures on my arm or a new bandage on my leg. They've stopped asking how I get them. They know I won't answer.

But no one knows that I patch up my Nightwatcher suit. I always repair it away from the lair, just to be safe (I don't trust the others to knock before they come into my room).

The less any of them know about the Nightwatcher, the better. Well, I suppose Mikey knows, now. Not that we've talked about it, though...

Chapter 19: Mutagen

Thankfully, Mikey and I were back to full health in a couple of days.

It's probably thanks to the mutagen in our blood. Something about advanced healing factors, or whatever. I wasn't really listening to Don when he was spouting about it. All I'm interested in is that I'm back on my feet quickly after any kind of injury or illness.

Bedrest *sucks*.

Don once tried to explain how being turtles gives us advantages – and disadvantages – that humans don't have. I'll admit that I tuned him out pretty quickly. It was cool at first. But once he started getting into 'genomes' and 'molecular studies' it all started to sound like white noise, anyway.

He's got this theory that we might've been wild caught as hatchlings, maybe even as eggs. That did catch my attention. I remember Don spending a whole summer running DNA tests on the sliders in Turtle Pond, trying to prove they were our relatives.

His tests were inconclusive.

I don't know why any of that matters to him. Even if he'd been able to prove that some random wild turtle was our great-great aunt/cousin seventeen times removed/some other distantly obscure relative, what difference would it have made? It's not like they could have told us stories about our turtle family, or taken us out for ice cream, or had any meaningful impact on our lives.

Yes, I guess it could've been neat to know exactly where we came from, or whatever. But it's not like that knowledge would do much to help us now. We're about as different from regular turtles as we are from humans. We don't belong in either category.

...Sometimes it feels like we don't belong anywhere. Most humans would never accept us, and we sure can't live our lives like regular turtles. It can get lonely, y'know? That canister of ooze sure threw a wrench into our lives. Splinter's, too.

But I wouldn't want to undo our mutation, either. Without it, my bros and I would be swimming around in some kid's aquarium, eating fish flakes right now. No thanks.

As far as I'm concerned, family are the ones that are there for you when you need them. Splinter's still my father, even though he's not a turtle. And I don't even have my mutation in common with Casey, but he's still my brother.

...Sometimes it feels like he's the only brother I still have left.

Chapter 20: Hero

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Mikey and I still haven't spoken about the Nightwatcher.

I'm not exactly keen to have that discussion. I'm not even sure he remembers. He *did* have a nasty concussion when I pulled him outta the wreck of the van.

Maybe I'll get lucky, and he'll think it was all some sort of dream? Not that I *want* him to have memory loss, or whatever... Just... Ugh! You know what I mean!

I know he looks up to the Nightwatcher. Mikey talks about him at home, sometimes. Back in the day, he'd have been throwing around all sorts of unsubtle hints that he knew it was me in the suit. But not now. Either he's trying to keep my secret safe from Don and Splinter, or he really doesn't remember.

...And I can't really tell either way, anymore.

Mikey's always wanted to be a hero. There was a time, early on, when Leo had not long left, and Mikey had only just started his Cowabunga Carl business. Back then, Donnie was driving the van for him and acting as a sort of manager/supervisor. Just until Mikey got his feet under him. And until Don figured our baby brother could be trusted with a driver's license.

...To be honest, I don't think Donnie ever reached that point. But his tech job started to take off, and Mikey's business got more bookings, so in the end he had to let the kid go out on his own.

But before that, when the two of them were still in the entertainment business together, I saw them. It was the evening, and I'd started my patrol as the Nightwatcher early. I normally wait until the sun's down, but it was the height of summer, and the skies didn't get dark until gone 9pm. I couldn't wait that long.

So, I'm out on my bike, in full gear, when Mikey's party van nearly runs me off the road! I swing outta the way and watch as my brothers try to chase down this dude in a car. So, it seems I'm not the only one out playing hero, after all.

Mikey pulls this crazy stunt and jumps outta the van onto the car's roof! I have to admire the kid's guts, even if he's got no brain cells to go with them. Then suddenly, the car swerves sharply and Mike's thrown off the roof into a pile of trash bags! I swear my heart stopped.

I was in two minds about whether to go help him, or not. On the one hand, I'm in my full Nightwatcher suit, helmet and all. I don't wanna risk Mikey or Donnie figuring me out. But that's my *baby brother* lying there in the trash! I can't just do nothing!

I'm saved from making a call when Mike bounces back up, sore but alright, and Don bundles him into the back of the van. I'm not worried anymore. Doctor Donnie will make sure the kid's ok.

But I keep an eye on the two of them, just to be on the safe side. They don't know I'm following them, of course. Even in full Nightwatcher getup, I still know how to be a good ninja. And my bros were kinda distracted keeping tabs on the car they were chasing.

Eventually, they managed to stop this guy in the street. And Mikey, in full Cowabunga Carl disguise – foam 'chucks, and everything – beats the snot out of this guy in front of a gaggle of kids, all while yelling about some stolen handbag!

Honestly: little brothers. I'm starting to understand why Leo always had a headache...

Chapter End Notes

This entry references the [second prequel comic](#).

You can't tell me that Raph didn't tail his brothers when he saw them in a literal car chase XD

Chapter 21: Wrestling

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

So, it turns out that the vans Donnie found online are all rust buckets. Guess that's about right, for what we can afford. Normally, Don would get one of them anyway and fix it up. He's no stranger to taking other people's junk and giving it a new lease of life, after all. It's what he did with Mikey's first van.

But there's no time for that, these days. Don's up to his eyeballs in his own work, and Mikey's got gigs piling up. He can't afford to wait around even for a few days for Don to overturn a lemon into something actually roadworthy.

Casey came through with the save, though. See, April's got this old VW van she barely uses anymore – she's away treasure hunting too much, and it's not big enough to haul statues back from the docks, so she's got a moving van for that kinda stuff. Which means her other set of wheels is just sitting there on the road, unused. So, it makes sense for Mikey to borrow it until he and Don can source something more reliable for themselves.

Mikey spent an afternoon painting his Cowabunga Carl logo on the body of his new van, Don installed that ridiculous inflatable head on the top of it for him, and he was back to work that evening. I dunno what April will say about it, but Casey assures us it'll be fine. I know she wouldn't say no if she was here. She's just as much a sucker for Mikey's Big Blues™ as the rest of us. But I dunno how she'll feel about not being consulted on it...

I don't think April and Casey are talking much at the moment. They're still together and everything, but I get the feeling that things are a bit... tense between them, now. Heh. Who knew that one member of the team going off for extended periods of time would negatively affect the dynamic...

Oh, wait.

Chapter End Notes

Perhaps not the kind of 'wrestling' that this prompt was originally thinking off, but it fits the 07 cast XD

Inspired by [April's VW van from the 03 series.](#)

Chapter 22: Cockroach

April got home yesterday.

She was gone for a few months, this time. I never figured April for the ‘travelling the world’ type, but she’s really thrown herself into this new job.

It started off small. Some guy came into the shop asking about this ancient, jeweled cockroach brooch, or whatever. Urgh. Just thinking about it makes my shell crawl! I don’t get why anyone would want something like that. But he was willing to pay, and April was able to track it down for him fairly easily. Win-win.

I guess word must’ve gotten out, because before too long she had someone else willing to pay her to hunt down some priceless artifact for them. Even paid her travel fees, too.

We all worried about her, at first. Don’t get me wrong: April can take care of herself. But she was going to be out there on her own, and she’s not got the fighting experience that Casey has, or the martial arts training that me and my bros have. Or, so we thought, anyway.

It turns out that Master Splinter’s been teaching her on the down low. And she’s apparently a quick learner (not that either of them will let us watch).

In addition, April is also a natural at this whole ‘treasure hunting’ thing. She’s a regular Lara Croft (just, without the British accent or the fancy mansion, I guess). And she enjoys it, too. Well, Casey says she does. It’s not like I get to speak to her much, these days...

Apparently, her latest client is this mega rich businessman named Max Winters. He’s got her flying across Central America, looking for all these statues he wants. Or so he claims. Casey’s not so sure he isn’t just trying to steal April. I don’t know anything about that kind of thing. April swears there’s nothing going on between her and this guy, so what business is it of mine? But Casey’s convinced this Winters guy is the actual cockroach.

I dunno, man. I’ve got enough drama at home already.

...

...

...

... Central America, huh? I wonder if April found anything else out there...?

Chapter 23: That's An Order

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Well, guess who came crawling back.

...

2 years.

2 *freakin'* years, and Leo just waltzes back in like he owns the place! Didn't even announce himself at the entrance, or nothing.

~~...As if this is even his home anymore.~~

I knew he'd arrived. Donnie and Mikey might have let their skills go rusty while Leo's been away, but I haven't. Honestly, it's kinda embarrassing how a pair of *trained ninjas* can let a dude just sneak up on them in their own home! (So, what if that dude is also a trained ninja, and their big brother...? *I* certainly know better than to let my guard down around him!)

I listened at the door to Sensei's room as Splinter welcomed him home. Even gave him a stinkin' medal, like a soldier returning from war! Ugh! Where's *my* medal for being here these past 2 years, huh? Where's *my* medal for keeping the streets of New York safe? Where's *my* medal for not abandoning my family to go off galivanting around the world?!

...

...So, what if there was a part of me – a *tiny*, pathetic part – that wanted to run in there, throw my arms around my brother and never let him leave again? That part doesn't know what it's talking about! Thankfully, my anger and indignation were much bigger and louder.

How *dare* Leo just walk back into our lives and take over, like the last 2 years never happened?! I don't care what Splinter says: Leo *ain't* my leader no more. Why should I have to listen to him, when he hasn't even cared one scale about *us* for the last 2 years?!

Splinter told him we were forbidden to fight until we could work as a team again. Ha! We were barely even a team before Leo left. Someone please tell me how we're meant to be *more* united now, after all this time apart??

There is no leader, because there is no team. And I sure as shell ain't following orders from a guy that jumped at the first chance he could get to walk outta my life!

Chapter End Notes

So, it just so happens that today, March 23rd in 2007, the TMNT movie was released in US cinemas.

Happy 19th anniversary, TMNT 2007!

We're into the timeline of the movie, now. I'll try to keep from just repeating the beats of the story we already know. But I'm loving how well these prompts are lining up XD

Chapter 24: Nocturnal

We've always been creatures of the night.

It goes hand-in-hand with being literal mutant freaks of nature. I can count on one hand the numbers of humans in this world that would tolerate giant, walking, talking turtles in front of 'em.

We don't fit in. Never have done, never will do, no matter how much the other guys want to pretend otherwise.

But somehow, I'm the only one that still keeps to our schedule these days. Mikey's job means he has to be out in daylight, and while Donnie's tech support line is 24/7 (seriously, who thought *that* was a good idea??), the majority of his callers ring up from their 9-to-5 jobs.

Even Sensei's up during the day. Now that we can get groceries delivered (thanks to Don's P.O. box and the fake address he has to register his and Mikey's businesses under), the nights of Splinter having to sneak out to scavenge for food are over. Instead, he spends his time watching *Gilmore Girls* and *Days of Our Lives*, now.

And then there's Mr. Fearless Leader. He may have been all around the world, but his last stop was Central America, which turns out to be just one hour's time difference from New York. So, he ain't got the excuse of jet lag, or nothing like that. But he seems to be just as comfortable being up during the day as the night.

Guess there's not a whole lot of artificial light to see by in the jungle at night. That, and the guy probably had to learn to sleep with one eye open for jaguars.

I ain't changing for the rest of them, though. And I ain't stopping as the Nightwatcher. It's just gotten a little harder to find time to sleep now that Leo's home and playing ringmaster again.

He hauled us all topside for a 'training exercise'. Yeah. Like *that* was gonna happen. I wasn't gonna fall in line again, even if we hadn't stumbled upon that big blue ape thing wrecking a construction site. And I don't care what Splinter says. I don't need nobody telling me what to do.

Chapter 25: Breathless with Laughter

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Aside from music, there's another sound we don't hear in the lair no more:

Laughter.

What even is there to laugh about, these days?

Master Splinter chewed us all out for disobeying him. But he especially laid into Leonardo. Well, serves him right. Leo could do with being taken down a rung or two. Or maybe a whole ladder. The temptation to laugh – ok, more like sneer – in his face was there, but I ain't dumb! I knew Sensei would haul me over the coals if I did so in front of him.

That feeling didn't last. We're still forbidden to fight. Splinter even tried to ground us to the sewers. I took off before he could lay down the law. No one's caging me in.

The fresh air – well, 'fresh' compared to the sewers, at least – was a relief after the atmosphere at home. So, why did I still feel incredibly heavy? I decided a run might make me feel better. Or at least take my mind off things.

... It didn't work.

I kept thinking back to that night Splinter announced he was sending Leo away for special training. He framed it like it was this huge honor that Leo – and *only* Leo – had earned. That it was going to take his ninjutsu to the next level.

Without us.

It always used to be the four of us. A whole set. Do not separate. We weren't complete unless we were all together.

... Maybe that's why Splinter sent him away: to teach us all some independence.

Well, look how *that* turned out! And now Master Splinter wants us to team up again, like the last 2 years didn't even happen?? What a joke!

In fact, it was so funny that I started laughing. And laughing. And laughing. I couldn't seem to stop. Our *whole lives* were one big joke, and there I was, on an empty roof overlooking the city, laughing my head off. I had to stop running, I was laughing so hard.

Turns out it's a bit hard to breathe and laugh at the same time.

...

...

...I'm not sure at what point the laughter turned into sobs...

Chapter End Notes

...I keep turning these otherwise fluffy prompts into brooding angst ^^; Oops!

Chapter 26: Disguise

The Nightwatcher suit gives me a level of freedom to walk around openly on the surface. It might feel liberating ... if I wasn't stuffed into leather armor with a metal helmet over my head. The visor alone cuts down on my field of vision.

But not wearing it is not an option.

I thought I had everyone fooled. Then Casey had to go and ruin it all. Do I really look like a giant, metal turtle? I didn't even design this suit. Ok, I modified it to fit my shell, but...

Do the others know? Is that how Mikey figured out it was me? Has Don got stills of me from the city's security cameras that he's analyzed down to the last pixel? Has Splinter stared at the grainy footage of the Nightwatcher on the news and recognized me from the way I walk?

The only one I can say with complete confidence that *doesn't* know is Leo. He didn't even know about the Nightwatcher until Mikey filled him in on everything he's missed here at home. (Yeah, he wrote to us, at first. But he didn't exactly have a fixed address for us to write back while he was off on his pilgrimage. So, there's a lot of stuff that Leo... doesn't know about.) And Leo's not had much of a chance to scope out the city since getting back.

But the biggest way I can tell he doesn't know is that big brother hasn't called me out on it. Yet. There's no way Leo would let insubordination like that fly. He'd be all up in my business if he even had a suspicion that it was me.

Well, I'm keeping my beak shut.

...Which is kinda hard to do when Leo keeps talking smack about the Nightwatcher in front of me! Oh, like *he's* so much better! Give me a break.

Please, tell me how what I'm doing is so different to what he was off doing in the jungle?!

...I'm sick of being lectured by a ghost.

Chapter 27: Brains and Brawn

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Donnie and I have always struggled to see eye to eye.

Just, not in the same way that me and Leo fight. Like, Don says a lot of stuff that goes straight over my head (I swear he's just making up words half the time). But hanging out with him never used to grind my gears the way just being in the same room as Leo does.

And then Leo took off, and Donnie stepped up to the plate. Urgh. And there I was, looking forward to a break from the daily lectures!

Don even went so far as to build a machine to keep tabs on me! Some kind of “trans-species locator matrix”, or whatever nerd thing he called it. Sure, he claimed it was to monitor all of us wherever we were in the world. (Gee, I wonder why he'd need something like *that*?!). But we all know he was going to use it to track my every move.

Talk about an invasion of privacy! There was no way I could have those guys following me around the city. My secret would've been out faster than Splinter scarfing down a slice of birthday cake.

So, I ... 'modified' the machine. I may not have Don's brains, but like I said, I do have my own tool kit. In the past I would've just smashed the machine to bits with my own two fists. And trust me: I was tempted. But I didn't want anyone to know I'd done it.

All I did was loosen the machine's cooling fan. Not enough to stop working (Don would have sniffed it out and fixed it right away, otherwise). Just enough that it wasn't ventilating the system properly. It's not much different to tinkering with an engine, after all. I was hoping the device would overheat and fry the whole thing, extra crispy.

And boy, did it! I could smell the melted plastic and burnt circuit boards from the sewer tunnels. I didn't mean for the thing to blow up, but at least that meant it would be harder for Donnie to rebuild it.

He didn't bother, in the end. Some run in while he was out in the city (I never got the full details) had him reconsidering the device. And then his tech support job took off, and he didn't have any free time for projects like that, anymore.

Chapter End Notes

This entry was inspired by the [3rd prequel comic](#)

Isn't it weird how Don's trans-species locator matrix just suddenly overheated and blew up like that... Hmmm...

Chapter 28: Isolation

I knew that if I stuck around at home, Leo and I were gonna get into a screaming match. And while I'd normally say *'bring it on, I ain't afraid of him!'*, I really wasn't in the mood to get into it there and then. So, like I said, I took off.

I tend to spend more time down at street level when I'm wearing the full Nightwatcher suit. Not that I can't get about on the rooftops in it, but all the leather and metal make it a bit clunky for running and jumping. With my full gear and helmet on, I can almost walk around among humans unchallenged.

... Almost. Guess not everyone got the memo that the Nightwatcher is a good guy. I suppose the suit is a little intimidating. Oh well. Win some, lose some. At least the scum on the streets have heard of me. As long as I'm striking fear into their hearts, I'm doing something right.

...It don't matter how many punks I take down, or how many crimes I stop. I always – every single time – feel this moment where it's like I'm watching myself from outside my body. Like, whoever's in the suit ain't me.

It always takes me half a second. It's like I'm waiting for something... a snarky quip, or a brainy statement, or a swift order.

It never comes, because it's not coming. Not anymore. Now it's up to me to crack the one-liners, and state the facts, and call the shots.

...Just...me.

This time I took off without my suit. I didn't want any of the guys to follow me to the place where I stash it. So, I was on the roofs of New York when I spotted those giant bat wings again. Only this time, I was free to follow them. The creature flew past Casey and April's apartment, so I picked up my sidekick on the way. Except, I wasn't counting on those freaky walking statues to show up, this time.

Before I knew it, Casey and I were stuck in some rooftop shed, barricading the door with our own bodies as this monster made of stone tried to tear its way inside to get us. I remember hearing a police helicopter outside, and the pressure on the door disappeared. And then, nothing.

I woke up on the floor of April and Casey's apartment, my brothers all hovering around me. *Great.* I hadn't counted on the lecture coming to find me!

That's it: I've had it. Leo wants to lead this team so badly? Well, he can do it without me!

I quit.

Chapter 29: Trust Fall

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Yeah, I'm mad. I'm *freakin'* fuming!

Who the hell does Leo think he is??

He can't walk back into our lives, all enlightened and whatever by his *special* pilgrimage, and expect us to trust him again, just like that. We're not a book, Leo: you can't just pick back up where you left off.

And he left off.

He left *us*.

He *abandoned* us.

He walked outta our lives *2 years ago*!

It's been 2 years since we were a team. 2 years since we were a family. 2 years since anything he said mattered to me.

And he expects me to just fall back into line again, like nothing happened?! No way. Not this time, Leo.

He's always been too big for his own shell, ordering us around like we're his soldiers, not his *brothers*. It's been that way ever since Splinter named him the leader. That was the last day I had a big brother. Every day since, I've only had a general.

Well, no more. I don't care what anyone else says. I'm going solo from here on out. It's worked just fine for the last 2 years.

Trust me, Mikey and Donnie sure as shell don't need me. They've got their cozy little lives, pretending to be humans - with their soulless jobs and their fake addresses and their bills to pay. Casey's better off without me, too. I know that beating up crooks with me is a source of conflict between him and April. And now that he's got his favorite son back, Master Splinter sure don't need me, either.

And Leo... he's never needed me. I think the only reason he's put up with me for this long is because we're family.

Pff. Some family. Well, allow me to save him the trouble.

I don't need him.

I don't need anyone to have my back. I don't need anyone to fight by my side. I don't need anyone to catch me when I fall.

I'm better off on my own.

And if Leo tries to come after me, he'll regret it.

Chapter End Notes

...Yeah...

Trust falls only work when everyone's working together.

Chapter 30: Jealousy

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I screwed up.

What was I *thinking*??

... I wasn't thinking. I wasn't seeing the person in front of me as my brother. All I could see was the object of a lifetime's worth of conflict and bitterness.

I knew it wasn't going to end well when I looked up and saw Leo on that roof. I tried to shake him, but unlike Don and Mikey, all Leo has done these past 2 years is train. Maybe, if I'd watched him closer while we were fighting that blue ape thing, I'd have seen that. But I didn't want to give him even a shred of credit.

My suit slowed me down. It's fine for chasing after humans – especially the ones that should've spent more time in the gym and less time robbing liquor stores – but against a lithe, agile mutant who's been surviving on his own in the wild for 2 years, I didn't stand a chance.

Still, I knew that I had the upper hand in a fight. Leo may be all speed, but 2 years of wearing metal armor and hurling around chains as weapons has given me the kind of muscle the others could only dream of.

And. I. Was. *Mad*.

Ok, Leo. You really wanna do this? Now??

Then bring it on.

I wasn't just fighting my big brother. I was fighting the source of all my frustration and anger and resentment over the years. I was fighting the one who showed me up at *every* training session. I was fighting the one who stole *my* rightful place as leader.

I was fighting the one who got all of Splinter's blessings, while I only ever got his disappointment.

...Except, I took it too far. I forgot that I was fighting my brother. I forgot to curb my anger, temper my strength, hold myself back.

Leo was right: I let my anger consume me, and I nearly lost sight of *everything*.

I nearly skewered him. He almost *died*, at my hand.

I nearly murdered my *own brother*.

I understand now. I get it. I know why he's the favorite student - the favorite *son*. I know why I can never measure up to him.

Because I'm not Leo. I spent all these years hating him, burning with jealousy against him. Refusing to admit that...

... That... if there's one person in the world I look up to the most... it's my big brother.

And now he's gone. Taken by those stone freaks.

... I'm sorry, Leo. I failed you.

But I swear - if it's the last thing I ever do - I'm gonna get you back, bro.

Chapter End Notes

I believe all Raphs struggle with self worth issues, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the iteration.

It's fleeting, but 07 Raph harbours a *lot* of it. Just listen to his confession to Splinter in the movie:

*"Raph: I know why you chose him now. I know that there's a reason why he's the better son **and I'm not.**"*

Someone give this poor boi a hug!!! 🥹

Chapter 31: With You to the End

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It took me way too long to come to my senses. And it almost cost us everything.

But we did it. Together.

We pulled through as a family and not only got our big brother back but saved the world in the process.

I'd forgotten how good it felt to fight - not *with* my brothers, but *beside* my brothers, once more.

... I think we'd all forgotten. Donnie and Mikey stepped up as if they hadn't missed a day of training in the last 2 years. Casey and April found a reason to fight together, for a change. And the years seemed to fall off Splinter when he entered the battlefield.

I've never been very good at expressing my feelings. Not the good ones, anyway. And even if I could've found the words to tell Leo how sorry I was – for what I'd done, for what I almost did, for what a complete jerk I'd been for far too long – it wasn't exactly the time or place to get into all that.

But that's ok. I think Leo got everything I couldn't say, anyway. He looked at me, and it was like all the hurt and anger just... fell away. I had my brother back.

I wish it hadn't taken almost losing him for good for us to start to mend the bridges between us. And I know it's only the start. If we've got any intention of fixing what's been long broken, then we've got a lot of serious talking to do.

But... I want to. I want my brothers back. Not just Leo, but Donnie and Mikey, too. I want to be a team again. I want to be proud of who we are and what we stand for. Especially if Karai's promise of 'familiar faces returning from our past' is anything to go by. If she means who I think she means, then it's gonna be more important than ever that we're united.

I ain't scared. I've got my family by my side.

Together, we can overcome anything.

Chapter End Notes

What a perfect way to round this month and challenge off! These prompts fit the 07 story scarily well!

I tell you what: it was so hard to wait for the right day to post each of them! This is why I don't normally write ahead or have a schedule for posting - because as soon as I've got a chapter I'm happy with, I want to post it!

Thank you so, so much to everyone who's followed along, commented, liked and enjoyed this fic. It's been so much fun to write, and a blast of fresh air to try something different like this. If ya'll enjoyed it, I may take a stab at this 'Diary entries for a prompt challenge' again, at some point (Though, I think I'd have to workshop the name a bit more ^^;).

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!